The Congregationalist

BETHLEHEM OF JUDEA, IN THIS YEAR OF OUR LORD
ONE THOUSAND NINE HUNDRED FIFTY-EIGHT

VOLUME 1 DECEMBER, 1958 NUMBER 10

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free." — Galatians 5:1

A GUEST EDITORIAL

DETROIT 1955-1958

Rev. Harry R. Butman, D.D., Los Angeles, California

(Dr. Butman is Chairman of the Executive Committee of the National Association.)

The National Association was born on a cold and stormy day. The delegates gathered in dark November in a hotel ballroom, the butt of acid wit by those who called their loyalty fanaticism, torn by divisions in their own ranks, uncertain of what lay ahead for Congregationalism, but certain that they could not "basely relinquish that which their forefathers had with difficulty obtained." The climate of their meeting was harsh indeed.

I had been assigned the task of writing the preamble to the Articles of Association. It was late at night and I stood wearily at the window watching the icy rain angle down as wind disputed gravity. I had a sense of despair at the impossibility of getting into lucid words all the complexities the committee had debated. But suddenly whole sentences were dictated to me, and I sat down to pencil swiftly on hotel stationery words which were later accepted by the assembly practically without change. And what took place in that one incident was repeated many times in those sessions. Out of welter and confusion came strange strong certainty. We found focus, purpose, oneness of will. We knew Guidance in those days of decision, and despite storm and gloom we went forth with hope.

That hope is finding fulfillment. This year our Annual Meeting was held in warmth and sun, and the mood of the meeting matched the weather. We met not in the secular shelter of a ballroom, but in a house of God. Our numbers were greater, our income had increased, and for all the setbacks of the intervening years we had gone forward. But chiefly we were blessed in the absence of strife, in "the fellowship of kindred minds," in the joy of working with glad hearts at the good work of rebuilding the broken wall of Zion.

When this year's last session was over I stood again in a Detroit hotel room, looking out of the window. But this time my eyes were blessed with quiet beauty: soft gold of low sun shining on Michigan flatlands, brown fields beyond the city's edge, the red embers of maples, and the blue autumnal haze over all like a benediction. The day spoke peace and fulfillment. I praised God at that moment because he had given us weather within like the weather without, and because he had honored his Son's promise and had been with the people gathered in His name. In storm and sunshine, in turbulence and doubt, as in stillness and assurance, God is with us to bless us as we walk the way our fathers walked, and make to our time in our manner the witness for freedom they so nobly made to their hour.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

A Visit to Your Church

Rev. Neil H. Swanson, Jr., Milwaukee, Wisconsin

One function of the Executive Secretary, as I see it, is to make as many personal contacts as possible. To that end, it is my desire to visit as many of the member-churches of our National Association as I possibly can within these next few months.

The pattern of these visits will vary depending on the circumstances. Sometimes the visit will be confined to the church itself. On other occasions, it will be wiser to invite a wider group. Whatever the pattern, it is of greatest value when thorough plans are made to utilize the time to the best advantage.

Perhaps I should share with you what has happened in two or three typical situations.

In Terre Haute, Indiana, I arrived on Saturday in time for a luncheon to which all of the Congregational ministers in the area and their wives were invited. That night I met with the church officers of First Church and their wives or husbands for an informal period of questions and answers. On Sunday morning I preached in the worship service. On Sunday evening I talked more directly about the program of the National Association to a fellowship gathering.

I spent an intensive Sunday in New York City, preaching in the two services of one church, addressing a meeting of the New York Fellowship of Congregational Churches in the afternoon, and meeting informally in the evening with a number of individuals. Invitations for the afternoon meeting were sent to a wide group.

In Minneapolis the pattern was different. There was only one meeting, which was called by the Congregational Lay Group of Minnesota, on a Tuesday evening. Invitations went to 1500 individuals — mostly in the Twin Cities area. But I arrived on Sunday evening, and spent Monday and Tuesday in a series of profitable conversations with a number of individuals. The appointments for these conversations had been set up by mail about two weeks in advance.

There would obviously be other ways of doing this type of thing. But whatever the pattern, I want to visit your church. Please write to me if you have any suggestions as to a date that might be best for you.

May I add that any of you who live in communities in which there is no member-church could still arrange for a meeting in your community to which all interested people should be invited. If you would like to organize such a meeting, let me know. Large or small, near or far, I will be glad to try to work it into my schedule.

Perhaps one of these days I will be in your church. See you then!

The CONGREGATIONALIST announces that Rev. Robert Haldane, Jr., has agreed to serve as Editorial Consultant for the Devotional Column. Those who would care to write devotional material for this column are requested to communicate with him at 2631 McCain Road, Jackson, Michigan.

Congregational Catholicity and Ecumenical Exclusiveness

Rev. Henry David Gray, Hartford, Connecticut

Those gathered at the International Congregational Council meeting in Hartford in July, 1958, found themselves presented with an apparent dilemma, a choice between non-catholic Congregationalism and non-Congregational ecumenicity. Congregational leaders from outside the USA seemed to find the juxtaposition of these two views puzzling. And not a few of those from within the United States (even though all persons associated with our National Association seem to have somehow been overlooked!) found themselves puzzled by "the Hartford dilemma."

Their puzzlement was natural, for the dilemma is the figment of the minds of those who created it. One speaker presented a caricature of the local Church and then roundly declared that his self-created caricature was powerless to act in many areas of present-day life, that it did not rightly represent "the great church," and that voluntary action cannot be depended upon to meet the needs of explosive problems such as population expansion, ministry to students, and mass communication, because the local Church is "too parochial" and because these needs "have no local character"!

Congregationalism Pilloried

The speaker then called upon Congregationalists to fulfill their mission in the world by carrying into ecumenical unity "whatever we have that is valuable." Denominations, said he, have a "specious plausibility"; but actually "protestantism is . . . one of the chief divisive forces in the United States today." Congregational polity was declared obsolete and those defending it today were distortedly presented as a few misguided persons who are "neo-fundamentalist in polity," standing on "radical anti-Congregational grounds." We were told that "the great church" must be free from all traditional barriers so that it can "establish the character of the church . . . forsaking denominations if necessary." "The great church" was presented as the answer to "the needs of today's world."

Rarely has the truly catholic, inclusive, open-armed, universal Christian character of the Congregational Way been pilloried with greater effectiveness. Rarely has the hard, Machiavellian exclusiveness of the so-called "great church" been more eloquently espoused.

An Artificial Dilemma

The difficulty is that the Hartford dilemma is the creation of a type of ecumenically-oriented mentality which chooses to ignore the catholicity of the Congregational Way and finds it convenient to ignore the exclusiveness of the kind of ecumenicity dominant in our day.

Those who "came out," who separated themselves from the Church of England in the sixteenth century did so *not* to found a sect, but to complete the Reformation by applying to polity the sound principles of the New Testament. Goodwin, Nye, Owen, and Robinson, to name but a few leaders, were concerned very deeply with a truly catholic Church, in which no creeds, ceremonies, costumes, or clericalism should be permitted to exclude men from fellowship with Christ and with each other. It was precisely their belief in the catholicity of New Testament Christianity which led them to put aside anything and everything which made the Church narrower than the gospel. No more inclusive polity has yet been devised than that which we call "Congregational." It is at once the most spiritual, creative, free, and responsible type of polity, because it trusts in God fully and purposes to walk in His ways sincerely on the basis of conviction.

Ecumenical Exclusiveness

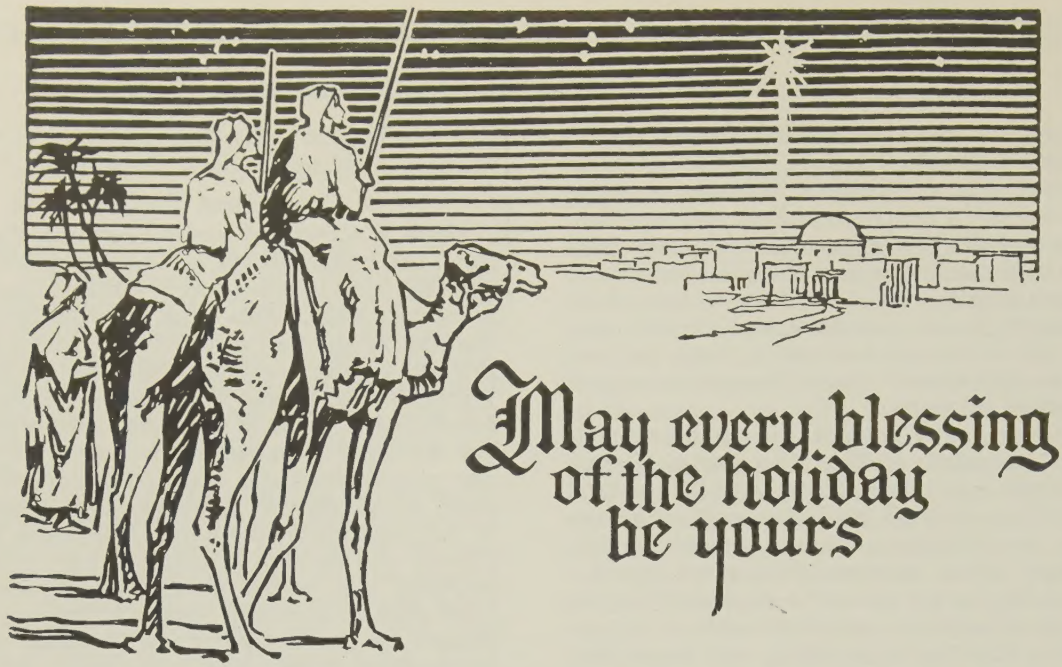
There is a chasmal contrast between the free, open, voluntary responsibility of Congregational catholicity and that type of ecumenicity which belies its name by its exclusiveness. This ecumenical exclusiveness shuts the door in the face of those who, like the Society of Friends, cannot accept the doctrinal standard of the World Council today. To judge by two speakers at the International Council, we must expect even more precise doctrinal formulae in the future; hence, we must also expect increasing ecumenical exclusiveness. The pinch of ecumenical exclusiveness has long been felt in the organizational sphere. Now, even the National Council of Churches is assailed as an evidence of our so-called "sin" in not all belonging to one vast monolithic church. It would appear to be true that we are headed for an increasing exclusiveness in organized ecumenicity. Then, there is the harsh exclusiveness in fellowship which has become so noticeable that even the exchange of well-tempered and sensible letters between fellow Christians has become a one-sided affair — the Congregationalist writes but the ecumenist does not answer. And it is quite impossible to persuade ecumenists to so much as discuss ecumenical or Congregational matters.

Ecumenical exclusiveness has resulted in a boycott of truth in a throttling of discussion, and in the prevention of free exchange of convictions. This is true on all levels, from the prohibition of anything unfavourable to the ecumenist in the now merged ADVANCE, the unwillingness of national or conference officials to appear on the same platform with leaders of the National Association, on down to the pressure placed on local pastors not to permit meetings to be held at which the Congregational position is upheld. Most significent of all, perhaps, was the stress at Hartford upon *an additional category* of ecumenical exclusiveness. It was broadly claimed that the Word we preach is "The Word of the Church," to which men must "re-submit" themselves. And it was strongly inferred that the valid interpretation of the Bible is the province of the great church. Here is one of the ancient and long-since repudiated heresies of the centuries, the claim to exclusive interpretation of the "Word."

Deformation or Reformation?

There was a time in western history when the "ecumenical exclusiveness" of the Latin Church was well nigh complete. It was not a time of great faith and renewal; it was a time of great indifference and corruption. What is being called for today is *a new deformation* of the Church, comparable to the deformation which took place in the thousand years prior to the Reformation. What the Church needs is not deformation but dedication, not exclusiveness but inclusiveness, not closed doors but open minds, not bigger organizations but a better spirit, not centralization in New York but consecration in each Christian, not trust in the power of the few who believe themselves called to tell us what we ought to be and do, but confidence in the power of God's Spirit to show us the ways in which we ought to serve, and to enable us to walk in those ways.

The Churches can best serve the purposes of God in Christ, not by the way of ecumenical exclusiveness, but by the way of Congregational Catholicity.



WHAT WISE MEN DO

Dr. Marion J. Bradshaw, Bangor, Maine

The donkeys balked stubbornly as we left the ancient monastery of Mar Saba and started the long trip up to Bethlehem. The guide kept repeating that we should have spent the night in the monastery which lies in a deep waddy of the wilderness of Judea.

After sufficient expression of their independence, the donkeys moved very deliberately in the direction we wanted them to go. Dogs barked fiercely as we passed the black tents of Bedouin people. The guide plainly sided with the dogs, — for he had hoped for a second day's pay for the one-day trip.

The sun was too soon touching the rim of hills above us. By the time we reached the field of the shepherds, darkness had come, but for some precious moments we thought of the glory of the Lord, of open heavens, singing angels, true wise men; of stately camels, and of joy to the world.

With reverie broken by the still resentful owner of the hired donkeys, we rode upward once again, following a path on which the ancient wise men might have travelled "even unto Bethlehem," three donkeys, a complaining guide, three hushed Americans. Above us, in the deepening night, dim lights formed a crescent on the side of dark Judean hills.

After winding upward in many twists and turns, our path took a wide sweep to the right, and as we moved in a fixed direction we found ourselves riding directly toward the brightest star we had ever seen. The donkeys moved with quicker step as they carried us up toward the evening star, the star of light, as if they too were strangely excited in seeming to be following a star. All talking ended, we could dimly see the top of some building outlined against the Western sky, with the brilliant orb of Venus hanging just above. Thus in wondering silence we entered the little town of Bethlehem. And the building over which the star had hung was the church which marks the place where Christ was born, where "earth received her King."

Who Are the Truly Wise?

Going thus to Bethlehem, and silenced by the night, the star, and by memory's solemn hush, one line of thought was inevitable: do wise men always follow stars? And who are the truly wise?

Men or nations never ask a more important question. The wise men of the East? The major prophets of the West? Among those renowned for wisdom which have the substance thereof? Among those thronged and acclaimed as prophets and seers, which will not deceive us nor lead us astray? Which will not urge us to follow the blind? Which will not confuse his own will with that of God, nor ever for his own purposes falsify his "Thus saith the Lord"? Or must we humbly own with Socrates that only God is wise?

No age has ever known better than our own that mature wisdom often starts with a nursery rhyme. And competent thinkers long have known that much of the wisdom of the ages is expressed in legend, fable, parable, myth. What is written of Jesus is almost equally true of Plato and of Buddha, too, that "without a parable spake he not unto them." And others also have told men parables "that they might not understand," — as if it were sometimes of prime importance that men be forced to see that they do not know!

Outer circumstance often combines with inward reflection to make it important to ask what wise men do. Not even a competent philosopher could answer that question better than does a simple gospel story too long reserved for children's use at Christmas time. St. Matthew's story has sharper insights than most of us have ever realized. Not even Plato, master artist among the world's great thinkers, could so well crowd into brief compass the attributes of wisdom, or so dramatically portray what wise men do.

Wise Men Keep Watch

The ancient text tells us, in the first place, that wise men are on the lookout, that seers keep watch. They are not content with what has been attained, however great the achievement of honored predecessors. They scan the horizon for signs of the coming of a better order, more worthy of being thought of as a Kingdom

of God. However well the Constitution has been amended, they want a city with more abiding foundations. It may not matter which political party has gained control of government, nor whether church or state has gained ascendancy, nor how capital bargains with labor. Wise men await a "coming kingdom." They are eager for the better. They expect a star in the East. Even if sustained by that peace which passes understanding, they have an eternal, divine discontent. There never has been a time when those truly wise have ever said of any actually established society, "This is the Kingdom of God." Wise men are on the lookout: seers keep watch.

Wise Men Act

There is also wisdom in that second word, "We are come." It is not necessarily that wise men will travel, nor follow phantom gleams, nor think themselves best warmed by strange fires. It is not that going East, turning West, is automatic proof of wisdom. It simply is that men enlightened find something to be done: that wisdom acts on knowledge gained. The wise let their insights lead to efforts aimed at realizing the richer possibilities in life. By vision led, they are by deeds done reborn, and before the leaders of some upward march, some steep ascent, they will simply say, "We are come," or nobly answer, "Here am I, send me."

But how the imagination wants to fill in what lay behind that journey's end! Perils of their countrymen. Dangers of the desert. Wilting heat of breathless canyons. Thin air of mountain passes. Singing sirens on treacherous ledges. Contented inertia of ignorant rulers. Futile pledges of false prophets. What likely wealth of high adventure is covered by the simple record, "We are come."

Wise Men Follow Stars

We are directly told, too, that the wise men followed a star. And what is a star? Certainly not simply a glowing point trillions of light years off in space. What *is* a star? Certainly more than a radiation of spectral lines revealing a measurable volume of describable gas. What is a star? Can we suppose that a thing is somehow what it does? And stars give guidance. That is what stars have always done. And in spite of wondrous discoveries and amazing inventions the stars still remain the most reliable indicators of direction available to man. Ages before motor lorries first crossed the desert wastes, slow caravans crossed the shifting sands in safety if now and then the stars appeared. Long before the compass came, sailors ventured strange seas, unafraid. They boldly charted unknown coasts. They searched the Western ways and sought the islands of the blessed. And they returned safe from far havens if they could but see the stars.

Wise men want true directions. They are not lured by siren signs the many in their ignorance seek. They do not rush out to see, each time wild rumor shouts, "lo here, lo there." They are not blown about by every wind of doctrine, nor caught by the "cunning craftiness whereby men lie in wait to deceive." They want to base their calculations on dependable data, to chart their courses by signs which do not fail. That is why wise men follow stars.

Wise Men Worship

We read next that the wise men bowed down and worshipped. Nothing could be more truly descriptive. The wise have always bowed down. They do not exalt themselves. It is others' good they seek. And they have always worshipped. The atheism charged against them has most often been the worship of a higher God that others did not know. They may emphasize their inability to catalogue in accurate lists the attributes of God. They may think it hopelessly crazy to insist that God has some one name.

Wise men worship. They need not forego their learning, nor in all ways become as little children. It may nothing matter whether they sit, stand, kneel, or bow. But with the wise there is, spoken or unuttered, an impulse to adoration, a reverence for something never seen by man at any time. They would strive for something better than the sensed and measured. They would commune with the Source of all their being, the Goal of all their hopes, with that which permits the appearance of experienced values and sustains the roots of all ideals.

The wise will not take whatever is as right, nor will they worship mere wielders of power. They will not reverence imperial shrines, nor shout "How great is Diana," as the gods go down. They will not bow down to sticks and stones, however cunningly engraved with idolatrous art. A more worthy reverence binds the wise together, nearer the nameless God.

Wise Men Bring Gifts

And lastly, wise men bring gifts. They always have brought gifts just because they are wise. It is not in order that they may receive again in kind, ten, thirty, or a hundred fold. Their gifts may not knowingly be laid at the feet of Christ, though many wise men who did not know it have truly laid them there. The treasures they open may not be gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Indeed, they may have nothing of silver and gold. But what they have they give. They know that giving is the first prescription for human happiness. And long before one of them put it in matchless words, other wise men had also known that it is more blessed to give than to receive.

The wise have pressed outward the far frontiers of knowledge. With precious insights, and often at the cost of life, they have purified our wisdom. With zeal and devotion they have created means of better and more abundant life. They have comforted the afflicted, opened prison doors, preached such a gospel that the poor became children of God. Matching hand to vision they have created beauty for a world to adore. Putting pen to thought they have made some age great and spacious, or helped in some green and pleasant land a new Jerusalem to build! Bringing good gifts to the least of these their brethren has been the wise men's chief concern. They have learned that in placing offerings at the feet of the Son of Man, they truly serve the unseen God in whose great image man is made. They know that in what they give lies the surest chance of lasting fame and the most enduring hope of happiness. So it is that wise men bring gifts.

Let us now again go even unto Bethlehem that we may freshly comprehend the things that wise men do!

In this Christmas number THE CONGREGATIONALIST is happy to present this article by Dr. Bradshaw, rewritten for us from his book "Third Class World," and the cover picture of Bethlehem today, taken by Dr. Henry David Gray in 1956.

WOMEN'S WORK

Second Annual Seminar on Women's Work

Theme for the Seminar on Women's Work was "Answerable Courages." In his journal Governor William Bradford of Plymouth wrote, "All noble deeds and honorable actions are met with great difficulties and must be endeavored and overcome with answerable courages." On this subject Dr. James W. Fifield, Jr., gave an inspiring address at the opening session, following a devotional by Mrs. Walton Cole, wife of the minister of the host church. The second session of the Seminar featured a panel discussion of the use of individual resources as an "answerable courage" to overcome the difficulties through which we are passing.

Support Missions Program

In his keynote speech Dr. Fifield strongly urged the women's groups to give substance to their Congregational convictions by supporting the missions projects of the National Association instead of continuing in apathy to send them where only a small fraction is used for the missions and much is actually employed for the destruction of the freedoms which have characterized Congregationalism.

Money for missions should be sent directly to Dr. Howell D. Davies, Treasurer, The Congregational Missionary Society, 100 North La Salle Street, Chicago 2, Illinois. (If included with other funds and sent to the NACCC office at 176 West Wisconsin Avenue, Milwaukee 3, Wisconsin, it will be forwarded to Dr. Davies.) It cannot be overemphasized that every penny thus given *gets to the missions!* Gifts may be designated for a particular project by women's groups as by churches and individuals; otherwise they are employed in a balanced program of mission work at home and abroad.

Women's organizations are urged, like churches, to support the general budget of the National Association with equal gifts sent to the Treasurer, Paul R. Biggs, Barclay Bldg., Oregon City, Oregon. This is essential for carrying on the work of the Association and its several Commissions.

Women's Project

By majority vote the Seminar adopted support of Piedmont College in Georgia as its Women's Project for 1959. The project for 1958 was Church Extension. It is hoped that all women's groups will direct a part of their benevolence giving to this joint effort. It should be labeled "Women's Project" when sent to Dr. Davies.

This help will be pooled to provide work-study scholarships and to purchase needed books and magazines for the library. James E. Walter, President, pointed out that the College Thrift Shop fills a need and is an additional source of income. It is also a good target for used clothing from our churches!

Three other projects were also particularly recommended for our consideration: Refugee work in Hong Kong and on Formosa among the aborigines, support of a Director of Christian Education for Metlakatla Mission in Alaska, and aid to Church of our Saviour in the San Fernando Valley. Wouldn't you like to help with one or all of these?

Program Handbook

"Stimulating Suggestions," the program handbook compiled by members of the Commission, is being enthusiastically received. It provides no cut-and-dried approach to monthly programs, instead is richly laden with inspiration and a choice of practical suggestions for the areas of study, service, stewardship, social relations, devotions. One copy has been sent to each organization. Additional copies may be secured for $1 each from the Association office.

Mrs. E. W. Adams of Marshalltown, Iowa, who edited the handbook, urged that its use be adapted to different situations, searching out new talents, and making the most of this "season for testing."

It is planned to supplement the program handbook with mimeographed material. Already available on request from the Association office:

"Two Program Outlines on Symbolism." Churches vary greatly on use of symbols. Whether yours uses few or many, familiarity with Christian symbols is desirable.

"Women of the Bible." Suggestions for staging and readings.

"Spiritually Installed for Service." An appropriate installation service.

"The Pilgrim Faith." A devotional written for a new church but easily adaptable.

"Harriett Beecher Stowe." Biography.

"Thomas Hooker." Biography and discussion guide.

"Cyclone in Calico." Brief review of biography of a pioneering Congregational nurse.

"Pilgrim Deeds and Duties" and *"Hero Tales of Congregational History."* Two brief reviews.

Seasonal devotions compiled by Gertrude S. Tracy, with appropriate and beautiful selections.

President's Letter

Periodic letters go from the Secretary of the Commission to the Presidents of the women's organizations in member churches. These are intended for the benefit of all the women; see that yours are being shared! In this way contact is maintained, participation spread, and sharing of ideas encouraged.

Commission Sponsors Competitive Project

Recommended by the Commission and endorsed by the Association was a project designed to encourage lay participation in the creation of Congregational materials for use in Christian Education Departments and other phases of Church work. Privately subscribed, prizes of $100 and $50 are offered for curriculum material on Primary, Junior, and Senior High levels, and for article or essay, drama, travel talk with film, local or state history and an anthem, promoting a better understanding of Congregationalism.

Similar prizes are offered for the best sermons promoting the ideologies inherent in Congregationalism. These will be featured at the next Annual Meeting, in commemoration of the 330th year of continuous fellowship between Congregational churches in America, William Bradford and a group from Plymouth having gone "to extend the right hand of fellowship" on the occasion of the founding of the church at Salem, on August 6, 1629.

Contributions Invited

If you have had a program, used a devotional, or undertaken a project that you think might be useful to others, please write to the Commission on Women's Work, at the NACCC office. Your contribution might be the statement of a need you would like the Commission to fill — or helpful comments on what is being done.

"Decision for Freedom" — 1958

Editor's Report on the Annual Meeting

It was said of the meeting at the Old Savoy Palace in London in 1658 that there was evident "a most sweet harmony of both hearts and judgments." The same words could well be used of the Annual Meeting of the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches of the United States in the First Congregational Church of Detroit, October 21-23, 1958. One minister has described it to his church, "Even a momentary indication of a 'beneath the surface' theological difference between liberal and conservative was warmly clarified in an open exchange of opinion which ended in the mutual expression of tolerance for differing theological interpretations, while remaining in the covenant of service to God and Christ as provided by Congregational polity. A sense of commitment to a cause felt to be harmonious with their understanding of the will of God and the functions of the church bound these delegates in a common purpose."

The Spiritual Note

A deeply spiritual note was sounded at the daily opening worship services led by Rev. John H. Alexander, Rev. C. Earl Page, and Rev. Leslie G. Deinstadt. The Communion Service Tuesday evening, in charge of the host pastor, Dr. Walton E. Cole, was most impressive. A new feature of the meeting was the hymn-singing at the luncheon tables, led by Professor Thomas Williams of Knox College. The musical program given by the Cass Technical High School choir on Wednesday evening brought inspiration to all.

Addresses and Symposium

At meal time we heard helpful and informative addresses by Robert C. C. Heaney, Esq., and Rev. Malcolm K. Burton on "The Legal Situation"; Mr. Jan J. Erteszek on "The Committed Church"; Mr. Issa Nableh of Bethlehem, who made a plea for better understanding of the Arab nations; Rev. William F. Behr of Cleveland (a former Evangelical and Reformed minister); and Dr. James W. Fifield, Jr., of Los Angeles. The address by Miss Katherine Lenroot of the United States Children's Bureau Tuesday evening, and the symposium on "Religious Freedom" on Wednesday, led by Professor Marion J. Bradshaw of Bangor Theological Seminary, President James E. Walter of Piedmont College, and Dr. R. Lloyd Pobst of the First Baptist Church of Jackson, Michigan provided food for deep thought.

The Moderator's Address, the message of the retiring Executive Secretary, the report of the Chairman of the Executive Committee, and the closing address, "Decision For Freedom" by the incoming Moderator, were among the high lights of the meeting.

Business Sessions

The two most important actions taken at the business session concerned the budget and leadership for the future. A three-level budget (minimum, medium and maximum), carefully prepared by Rev. Neil H. Swanson, Jr., Executive Secretary, and approved with some changes by the Executive Committee, was presented by Dr. Harry R. Butman and approved by the meeting. The successful raising of the funds to meet these forward-looking plans will depend on the loyalty of our member churches and their people.

"Dwindling Opposition to the Union"???

No one who was present at the Detroit meeting will take seriously the statement sometimes heard from pro-merger sources that "opposition to the union is dwindling." A total of 335 individuals from 21 states,

(*Continued from column 1*)

with official representation from 93 member-churches, compared very favorably with the Hartford attendance, a year ago, of 263 individuals and official representation of 76 member churches. The growth during the year from 147 member churches to 171 is a significant evidence of progress and of deepening loyalty to the principles of our free church order.

Confidence in the Future

Our hopes for the eventual triumph of the cause for which the National Association was organized rest partly upon the abilities and devotion of such men as those who have accepted responsibilities for the work. The presentation of a scroll of recognition to Dr. Harry W. Johnson, and the applause given to Mr. Swanson as his successor as Executive Secretary, indicated the confidence we have in such men. Dr. Butman's consenting to serve another year as Chairman of the Executive Committee, at no small cost to himself, shows his dedication to the cause.

Our hopes lie also in the free church principles to which we are committed. Time after time these have been challenged, time after time they have reasserted their validity. But most of all "our hope is in the name of the Lord." It is our deep-seated belief that as was said of old, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," so today, His Spirit dwells in those who "stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free."

Our Devotional Column

Rev. Norman S. Ream, Wauwatosa, Wisconsin

Christmas is the birthday of One who revealed that to live for others was the best use of life. Jesus not only lived for others, He taught us how we can live for others.

Think of His life and teachings. Because one man lived for others, the history of nations and the history of human life on earth is different than it would otherwise be. We like to talk about the New Testament miracles — insignificant things like changing water into wine, walking on the water, or even healing the sick. But here is the greatest miracle of all — a Man who actually lived all of His life for others.

This is why we have Christmas. This is why Christmas has lasted for two thousand years. Even though you and I don't live this kind of life, and even though we often don't ever intend to, we recognize that we ought to. God gave us life for this reason.

Most of the time when we meet someone new, we are primarily interested in the unimportant details of their life — where they were born, where they went to school, what they do for a living, what kind of family they have, and all the rest. These are superficial facts of life, interesting but not particularly important. What is important is what a man is, what truth he possesses, what kind of life he leads.

Jesus was born in a dark, reeking stable. He died on an ugly, wooden cross on a hill. We are all familiar with these physical facts surrounding His life and death. But again, is this what we want to know? Will this help us? What we really want to know is who He is and what He is, for somehow or other we have the feeling He was what we were meant to be.

Do you and I really want to know Him? If we want to know Him, we must follow Him, but we cannot follow Him until, like Him, we use our lives for others.

PRAYER: *"O Lord, teach us how to love and serve one another, even as thou has loved and blessed each one of us. Amen."*

WILL YOUR SUNDAY SCHOOL HELP?

Help for students in two missionary areas being aided by National Association churches is being requested. In South India, of the $90.00 needed by twelve high school pupils for clothing and books, $25.00 has been raised by a local canvass committee. This is a large sum considering the poverty of the people. Mr. Zachariah writes, "My attempt is just to create a spirit of self-help."

President Benjamin Chen of the Bible Institute in Hong Kong says that three out of the fourteen students there are so poor that "each one needs $10.00 a month for food only."

Will your Sunday School contribute toward the $65.00 so urgently needed to supplement what was sacrificially raised in South India, and toward the $30.00 a month "for food only" for future evangelists in Hong Kong?

Gifts may be sent to Howell D. Davies, Treasurer, Room 2308, 100 North LaSalle Street, Chicago 2, Illinois.

NEWS NOTES

Rev. Robert A. Hutchinson, Hood River, Oregon, has been called to Plymouth Church, St. Helen's, Oregon, to succeed Rev. Ernest A. Bellingham, who has retired.

Up to this date twenty-two application forms have been requested for participation in the Savoy Declaration Contest. Writers from all parts of the country have signified their intention of writing a layman's study book outlining our Christian faith as set forth in the New Testament and presenting the nature of the Church and the duties of Church members as set forth in the Savoy Declaration.

From the Letter Box

Editor, THE CONGREGATIONALIST:

The appearance of "a resemblance to the Mayflower" on the cover page of the first issue of THE UNITED CHURCH HERALD suggests that there have been three Mayflowers with varying symbolism. The original ship of 1620 was a symbol of rebellion against the authoritarian church and state; Mayflower II, the famous replica which crossed the Atlantic in 1957, was an officially designated symbol of Anglo-American friendship; Mayflower III, the "replica" of this magazine cover and of *The Basis of Union,* is a vague symbol of today's ecumenical movement and of the United Church of Christ as a phase of that movement.

The sailing orders of Mayflower III may be found in the words of co-skipper James E. Wagner: "The United Church of Christ will be a Presbyterian structure depending on the Congregational spirit of free and voluntary cooperation for its implementation." In other words, Mayflower III is a synodal ship with Congregational wind in its sails!

REV. ALAN JENKINS
Royal Oak, Michigan

Congregational Bookshelf

Rev. Royal G. Davis, Los Angeles, California

Leo Pfeffer is a lawyer interested in the effect of religion upon American culture and a Jew sensitive to civil liberties. He therefore does an excellent interpretation of religious conflict in CREEDS IN COMPETITION (Harpers $3). His survey covers all phases of Protestant-Catholic-Jewish-secular disagreement, from movies to birth control; parochial schools to fluoridation; Spain to the Zionist controversy.

This book bears all those marks of legal skill, careful and persuasive argument, clear analysis and broad coverage, pointed discussion and logical conclusions. The balanced treatment of opposite viewpoints is particularly commendable.

Pfeffer believes that competition is both necessary and desirable. Justice Holmes remarked that "the best test of truth is the power of thought to get itself accepted in the competition of the free market." The good life is a dialogue between competing churches, different ideals, opposing claims to allegiance. The free man wants to be able to hear all sides before making his choice.

The author is so fair when he treats Catholic-Protestant-secular disagreements that one is sorry to miss that objectivity in his discussion of intra-Jewish problems. He dismisses the anti-Zionist policy of the American Council for Judaism as "bitter." That group believes Judaism is a religion with no committments to the foreign state of Israel. Zionists disagree and have waged a war of words frightful to behold. Here Pfeffer is caught with his prejudice showing.

The drive for Protestant union is seen as a reply to the growing influence of Catholicism. But do we curb Catholic power by imitating it in our emphasis upon centralization, bigness, political action, theological uniformity and consolidation? Pfeffer interprets religious competition as checks and balances conducive to the best expression of American life. If that be true between one faith and another, it should apply within a denomination as well. Real maturity comes from the dialogue between equals, individuals, local churches or denominational fellowships.

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